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North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction

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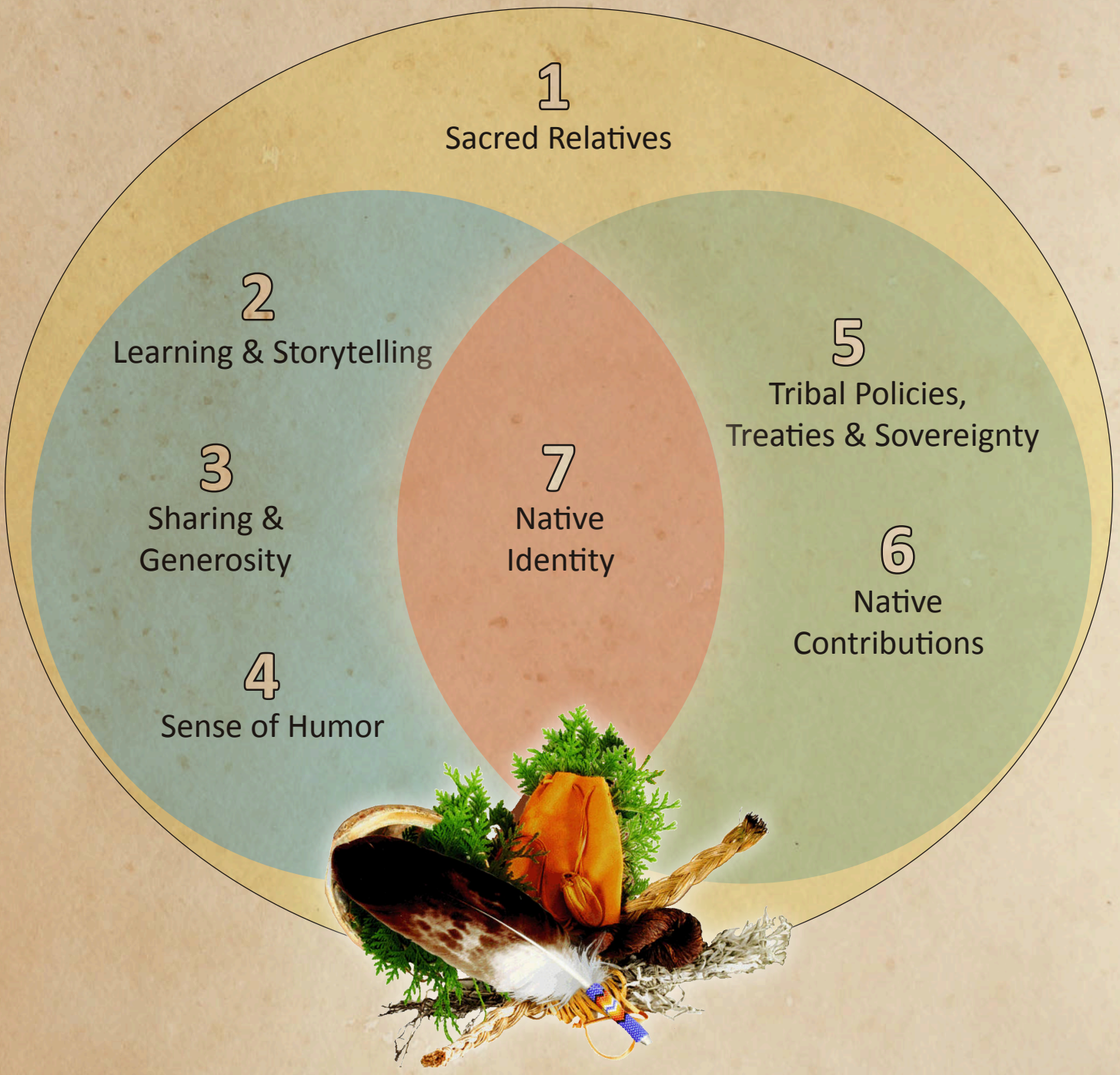
North Dakota Native American
Essential Understandings



Four Sacred Medicines

Tobacco Cedar Sage Sweetgrass

Introduction to the North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings (NDNAEU)

In the spring of 2015, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction brought together tribal Elders from across North Dakota to share stories, memories, songs and wisdom in order to develop the North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings to guide the learning of both Native and non-Native students across the state. Similar Essential Understandings have been developed and are being used in several other states already, and more are making plans to begin a similar process. Many tribal Elders have had input into these understandings, and it is hoped that the NDNAEU themselves will open up many more additional opportunities for tribal Elders and Educational Leaders to impact ND classroom practice with important tribal stories, songs and cultural perspectives.

The learning benefits to ND students who have a tribal or native heritage are clear. According to research around Culture Based Education (CBE), "…in culture-rich environments, teachers push beyond conventional best practice to achieve greater relevance, relationships, and rigor using culturally responsive, relevant approaches. Teachers can and must make learning culturally meaningful to their students and families by honoring culture and place in teaching and learning with respect to the heritage language, family and community involvement, instructional content and context, and authentic assessment" (Kanaʻiaupuni and Ledward, 2013).

The benefits to ALL students who learn in educational environments that are culturally responsive and value multiple cultural perspectives are clear. The following is a summary of outcomes connected with multi-cultural education compiled in ASCD Express, Vol. 6, No. 15., 2011 *(http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol6/615-koppelman.aspx).*

1. All students should be encouraged to affirm themselves as unique individuals and they should accept and respect the differences shaping individual identities of other students.
2. Students should learn about their group from the school curriculum and about the diverse groups in American society to have a basis of appreciation and respect for cultural diversity.
3. Students should engage in intergroup dialogues that promote cross-cultural communication skills and reduce biases and prejudices.
4. Students should learn to be critical thinkers able to analyze historical and contemporary issues in order to make intelligent decisions about problems and conflicts.
5. Students should engage in activities that address social justice issues and be encouraged to develop and implement strategies to respond to such issues in their school and their community.

It is the hope of both the ND Department of Public Instruction and the tribal Elder team of writers that these seven NDNAEU can create a framework for learning that will foster these outcomes. The NDNAEU are merely a starting point for this work. It is our expectation that the next several years will see the active engagement of many more educators, administrators, tribal Elders and communities in developing additional resources, lesson plans, curricula, video interviews and collaborative projects as guided and informed by the NDNAEU. The ultimate goal of this document is to increase learning, understanding and well-being among all North Dakota students, educators and communities.

Sources:

Multidisciplinary Research on Hawaiian Well-Being Vol.9 (2013) Copyright © 2013 by Kamehameha Schools. Accessed 10/11/2015 at www.ksbe.edu/_assets/spi/hulili/hulili_vol_9/7_2013_Vol9_Kanaiaupuni__Ledward_rev.pdf

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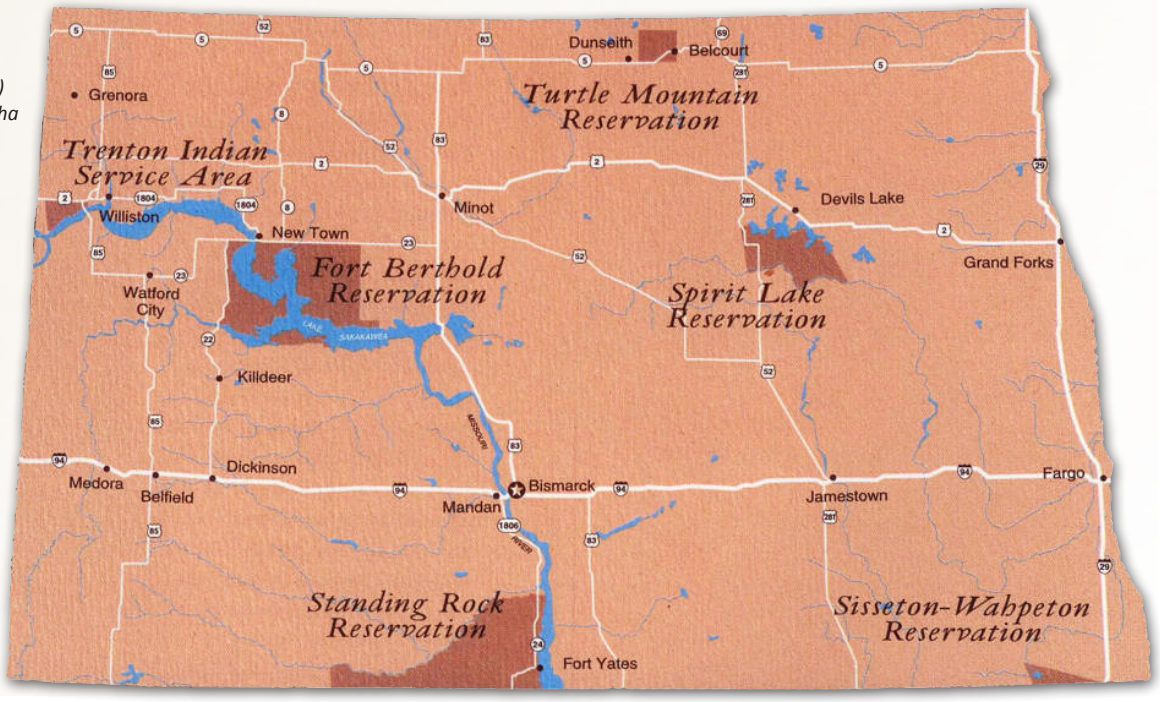


North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings
(short descriptors)

How we relate to everything:

1. **Sacred Relatives:** Native people practice a deep interconnectedness with the land, the resources, the water, all living things and all human beings. Land stewardship, respect for all 2 legged, 4 legged, winged, crawlers and swimmers and a strong belief in the sacredness of all human beings are key elements of our spirituality.

How we promote and sustain our cultures, languages & traditions:

2. **Learning & Storytelling:** Traditional teaching and the passing on of knowledge and wisdom was done through storytelling, song, ceremony and daily way of life, often incorporating specific gender and age specific responsibilities. These continue to be some of the best modes for learning for both Native and non-Native learners.
3. **Sharing & Generosity:** Native people have rich traditions of sharing and generosity which include gifting, shared meals, Pow Wow gatherings, shared living spaces and care for relatives, including the environment, natural resources and waters.
4. **Sense of Humor:** Native people have a rich history of shared sense of humor that includes teaching stories involving Iktomi, Maymaygwisi and Nanabozhoo. These stories and this unique sense of humor continue to support our resiliency and cohesiveness.

How we respond to & contribute to all of society from local to global:

5. **Tribal Policies, Treaties & Sovereignty:** Native people practice self-determination, developing tribal policies and practicing political activism. Despite a history of US policies and Treaties that have often been detrimental, Native people are members of sovereign nations that predate the US government.
6. **Native Contributions:** Native people continue to contribute to all levels of society from local to global in diverse fields including medicine, science, government, education, economics, art, music, and many more.

Who we are:

7. **Native Identity:** Individual and communal identity is defined and supported by shared Native languages, kinship systems, Tiospaye, Clan structures, traditional teachings, values, sacred laws and ceremonies. A continuum of tribal identity, unique to each individual, ranges from assimilated to traditional lifestyle. There is no “generic American Indian”.

1. Sacred Relatives

Native people practice a deep interconnectedness with the land, the resources, the water, all living things and all human beings. Land stewardship, respect for all 2 legged, 4 legged, winged, crawlers and swimmers and a strong belief in the sacredness of all human beings are key elements of our spirituality.

Arikara man, wearing a bearskin, 1908.

Extended Description

The tribes in North Dakota have creation stories telling how we came into being on earth. No tribe disagrees with or makes fun of another tribal Creation story; the stories connect to one another. We practice our ceremonies, medicines, and plants to keep us whole and connected to the Great Mystery of life. We teach our youth the Natural Laws of the Creator for their well-being (Elder JT ShiningOne Side).

One of the beliefs that we, as Native people, share is the knowledge that every living thing has a spirit. Sometimes described as "respect", it is much more than that. It is our belief. The Ojibwa (Chippewa) creation story says, "The Creator breathed life into all that He created." We are taught that each blade of grass, etc. has this spirit. Gregory Cajete, in his book "Native Science" uses this same analogy when he explains the difference between Native science and Western science. It is the reason we put tobacco down before we take a medicine, or a plant (Elder Carol Davis).

"…a belief in the sacredness of all human beings is a key element of our spirituality"

2. Learning & Storytelling

Traditional teaching and the passing on of knowledge and wisdom was done through storytelling, song, ceremony and daily way of life, often incorporating specific gender and age specific responsibilities. These continue to be some of the best modes for learning for both Native and non-Native learners.

Extended Description

When we sing the songs and tell the stories, we pass on the wisdom, knowledge, and teachings of praying, fatherhood, motherhood, coming of age ceremonies, care of the home, children, environment, and care of the water. We teach respect for life, self, family, star, and universe knowledge. In all of this one finds truth to live a good life (Elder JT ShiningOne Side).

Petroglyphs are another form of storytelling. This is a drawing of an underwater panther (mishibizhiw) as well as two snakes and a canoe, attributed to the Ojibwe people. *Wikipedia.org File: Underwater_Panther_rock_painting_(crop).jpg*

Turtle Mountain Chippewa Elder J.T. Shinging Oneside tells the story of how the Sweat Lodge came to her people.

"When we sing… we pass on the wisdom…"

3. Sharing & Generosity

Native people have rich traditions of sharing and generosity which include gifting, shared meals, Pow Wow gatherings, shared living spaces and care for relatives, including the environment, natural resources and waters.

Extended Description

The Native American people are chosen to shine the light of peace onto the world to teach the truth of the Creator. We share our cultural knowledge with other tribes and nationalities for survival and as a part of the web of life. "What one does inside the web is felt by all." (Elder JT ShiningOne Side).

Mandaree resident and senior Environmental Science major at Ft. Berthold Community College Lisa DeVille wants proof that water is safe to drink after Bakken fracking oil spill threatens Missouri River.

Caption and Photo by Talli Nauman
www.indianz.com/News/2015/016792.asp

Reconstructed Hidatsa Earthlodge In Stanton, North Dakota

4. Sense of Humor

Native people have a rich history of shared sense of humor that includes teaching stories involving Iktomi, Maymaygwisi and Nanabozhoo. These stories and this unique sense of humor continue to support our resiliency and cohesiveness.

Dakota Elder Demus McDonald usually includes humor when he tells about his difficult boarding school experiences.

Extended Description

As Native people we have seven sacred medicines, tobacco, cedar, sage, sweet grass, water, laughter, and land to keep one in balance in life. Laughter is a good medicine that brings your spirit up. The stories through humor teach lessons about life. We love playing humorous jokes on each other (Elder JT ShiningOne Side).

Elementary school class of Indian students with botanical specimens at United States Indian School, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

"Laughter is good medicine"

5. Tribal Policies, Treaties & Sovereignty

Native people practice self-determination, developing tribal policies and practicing political activism. Despite a history of US policies and Treaties that have often been detrimental, Native people are members of sovereign nations that predate the US government.

Mandan and Arikara delegation - NARA - between circa 1874 and circa 1907.

Extended Description

We come from a proud, rich heritage, and we use the Seven Sacred Laws to maintain order in the tribal villages. We are taught from the Elders, medicine people, warriors, chiefs, clans, and guidance of the spirits in ceremony, and the dream world about living a good life (Elder JT ShiningOne Side).

Tribal dignitaries are introduced in the North Dakota House of Representatives Chamber at the "State of the Tribal-State Relationship" delivered by Hon. Dave Archambault II, Chairman Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, January 8, 2015.

www.uttc.edu/news/story/010915_03.asp

6. Native Contributions

Native people continue to contribute to all levels of society from local to global in diverse fields including medicine, science, government, education, economics, art, music and many more.

Extended Description

Native Contributions to North Dakota are AKI-rich black dirt for farming, ranching, native species, trees, berries, waters, irrigation, natural medicines. Three sisters (corn, squash, and beans) We bring people and help them to heal with our medicine, prayers, and ceremonies. We contribute the Natural Spiritual Beliefs of connecting the four realms of life. (MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, SPIRITUAL) We bring the Shakey Tent, Doodooswan-Sweat lodge, Thirsty Dance (Sundance) Big Drum Ceremony, Buffalo Dance, Jingle Dress Dance, Making of a Relative, Lacrosse, Wigwam, Moon Ceremony, Nimiiwin-Powwow. We are natural barterers and traders. We love to live life in a natural, humble way to include the elders, children, and the family. American Indians have a warrior tradition and a high military volunteer rate. According to statistics provided by the U.S. Department of Defense, in 2010, 22,569 enlisted service members and 1,297 officers on active duty were of American Indian heritage. So while the U.S. population recorded only 1.4 percent American Indian, the military population was 1.7 percent Native, making it the highest per-capita commitment of any ethnic population to defend the United States (Elder JT ShiningOne Side).

Woodrow Keeble (1917–1984), Medal of Honor recipient and Sisseton-Wahpeton Tribal member.

Vine Deloria Jr., Standing Rock Elder, scholar, writer and activist.

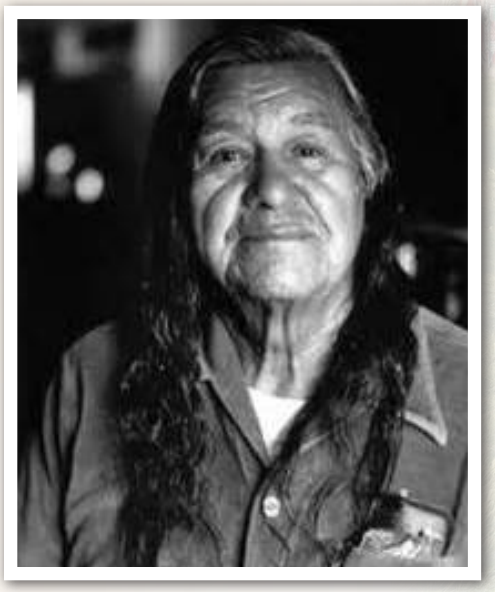
7. Native Identity

Individual and communal identity is defined and supported by shared Native languages, kinship systems, Tiospaye, Clan structures, traditional teachings, values, sacred laws and ceremonies. A continuum of tribal identity, unique to each individual, ranges from assimilated to traditional lifestyle. There is no "generic American Indian".

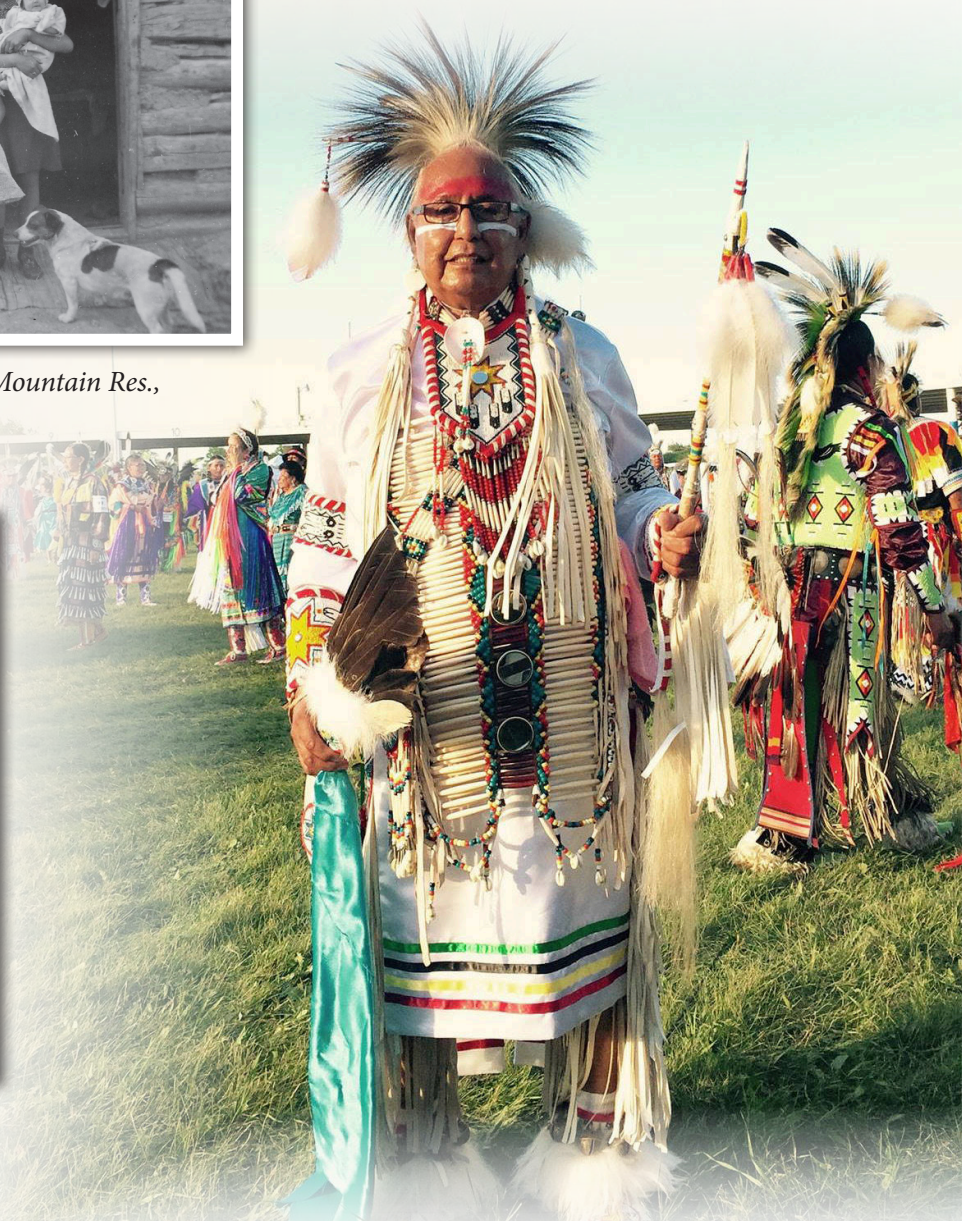
Extended Description

As an Ogichita dakwe (warrior woman), knowledge keeper of the old traditions, carrier of the ceremonies and ancestral pathway, I affirm that it is important to remember the Old way and New way of the Red people. "If one knows the 'Old way' and the 'New way' they become a 'Powerful being.'" (Francis Old Eagle Heart Cree, TMBC). The Coming of Age Ceremonies help our youth to build their native identity. Naming ceremonies help our youth identify with their spirit and connect to the spirit world (Elder JT ShiningOne Side).

"Typical Chippewa Indian home." Turtle Mountain Res., North Dakota. – NARA circa 1943.



Francis Old Eagle Heart Cree 1921-2007.



Elder Oliver Gourd in traditional regalia at the 2015 Spirit Lake Powwow.

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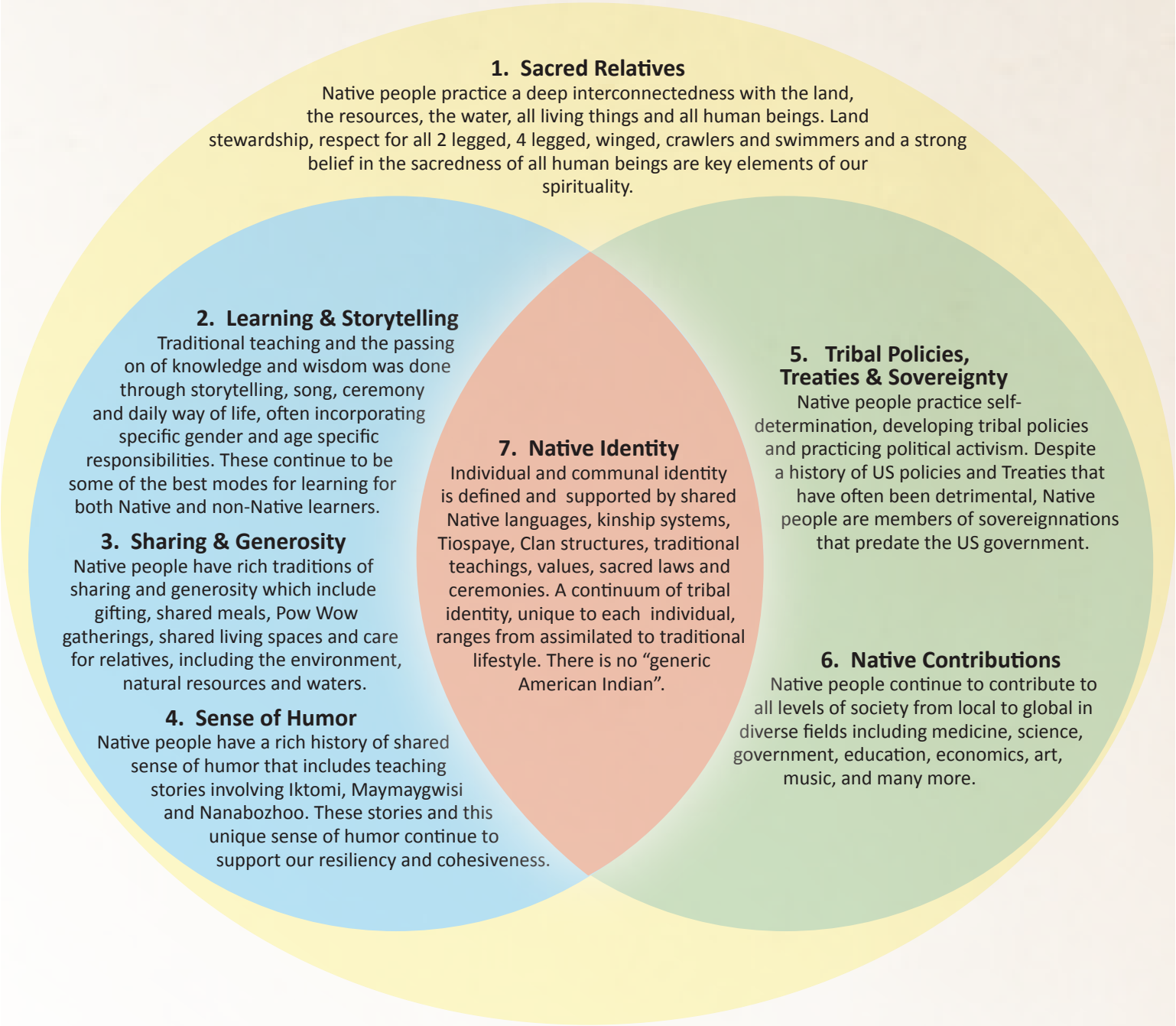

To hear and see many of the Elders who worked to create these Essential Understandings visit the Teachings of our Elders YouTube channel at https://goo.gl/oAc793.

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- Carol Davis - Turtle Mountain (Chippewa)
- Eugene Hale - Spirit Lake (Dakota)
- Oliver Gourd - Spirit Lake (Dakota)
- Demus McDonald - Spirit Lake (Dakota)
- Marilyn Hudson - Three Affiliated Tribes (Mandan/Hidatsa/Arikara)
- Dr. Linda Gourneau - Three Affiliated Tribes (Mandan/Hidatsa/Arikara)
- Emma Jean Blue Earth - Standing Rock (Lakota)
- Sunshine Archambault-Carlow - Standing Rock (Lakota)
- Angeline Fourth Iron Road - Standing Rock (Lakota)

Personal photos provided by Elders Jt Shining Oneside and Carol Davis

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